

2011 Montana Wolf Hunting Season Summary & Next Steps

March 8, 2012



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

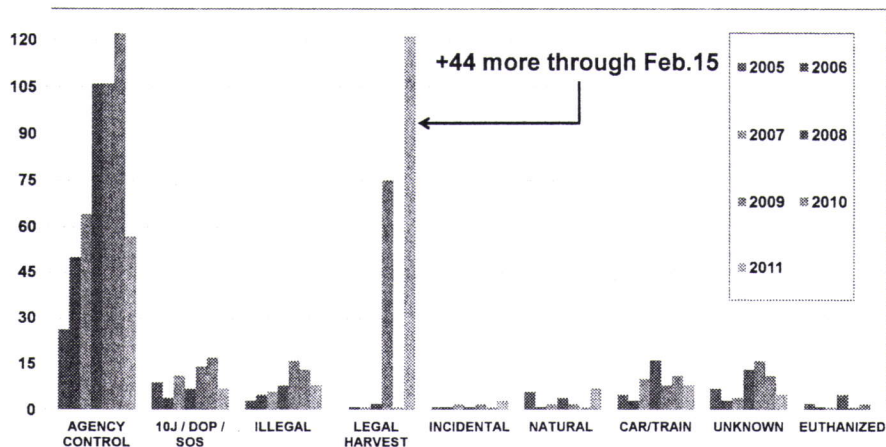
2011 Wolf Season Proposal

- **Proposed Quota**
 - 220 (40% harvest rate in each of the recovery areas, predicted to reduce minimum count to 425)
- **14 wolf management units in 3 recovery areas**
 - Subquota = 3 in HD 316 in WMU 390
 - Subquota = 4 in HD 280 in WMU 290
 - NEW → WMU 250 (W Fk Bitterroot) = 18
- **Season Dates**
 - Archery Only – Sept 3 – Oct 16 (NTE 20%)
 - Back Country – Sept 15 – Dec 31 (NTE 20%)
 - General Rifle – Oct 22– Dec 31 (Extended to Feb. 15)

Livestock Losses from Wolf

- Livestock complaints:
 - 233 in 2009
 - 191 in 2010
 - 152 in 2011 (approx. 50% verified as wolf-caused)
- Livestock losses
 - 87 cattle, 64 sheep, 5 horses, 3 llamas in 2010
 - 74 cattle, 11 sheep, 1 horse in 2011
- 2011: 17% of packs confirmed to have killed livestock.
- 2010: 31% of packs confirmed to have killed livestock.

Wolves removed in Montana, 2005-2011



2011-12 Wolf Season Results

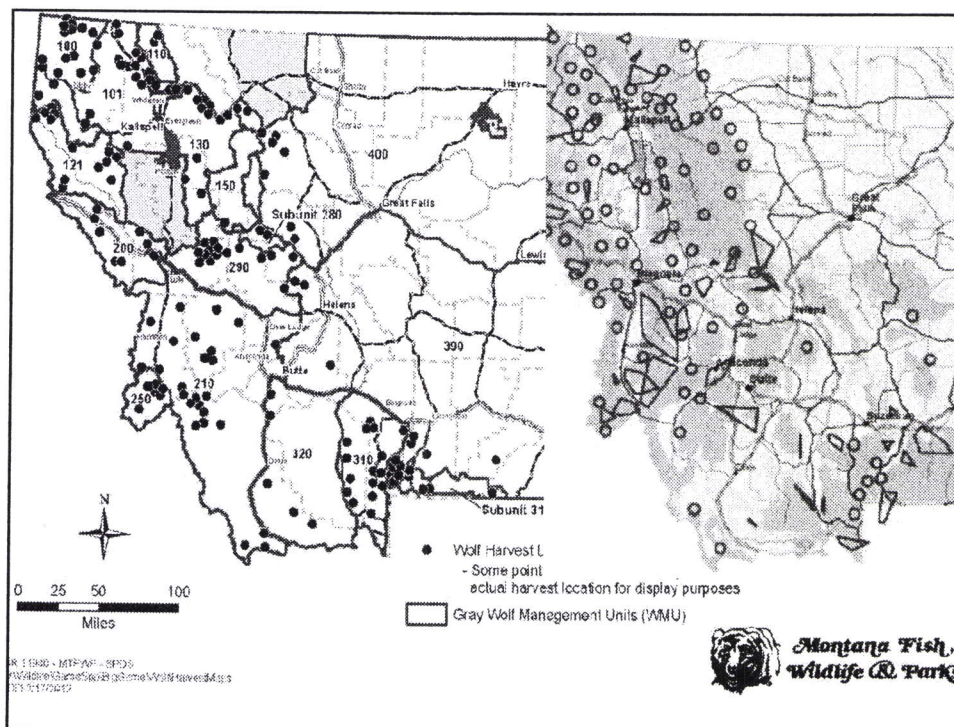
- 18,689 licenses sold
- 166 wolves taken from 60 different packs
 - 11 by Archers
 - 155 by Hunters (1.3 wolves/day)

97 adults / 35 yearlings / 25 yoy / 7 unknown

86 male : 80 female

115 gray / 37 black / 7 white / 7 unknown

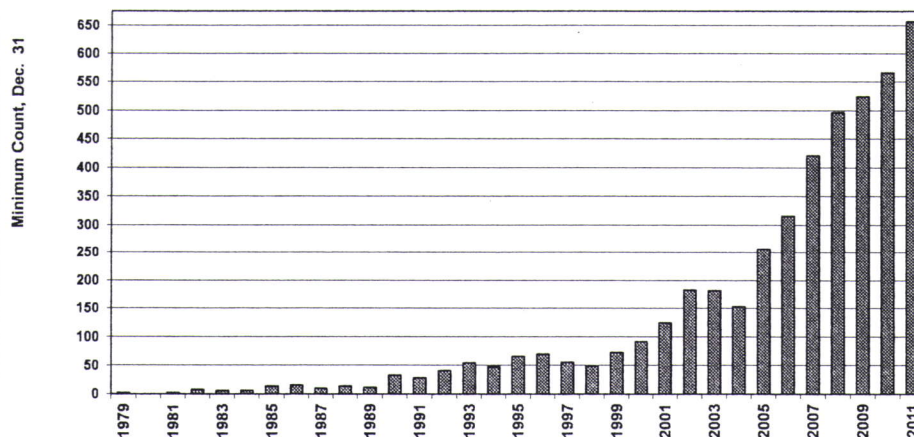
52% on public land / 48% on private land



2011 Annual Report Summary

- Minimum 653 wolves (up from 566)
- 130 Packs (up from 108)
- 39 Breeding Pairs (up from 35)
 - NW Montana - at least 372 wolves in 85 packs, 23 of which were breeding pairs.
 - W Montana (CID), at least 147 wolves in 23 packs, 7 of which were breeding pairs.
 - SW Montana (GYA) - at least 134 wolves in 22 packs, 9 of which were breeding pairs.

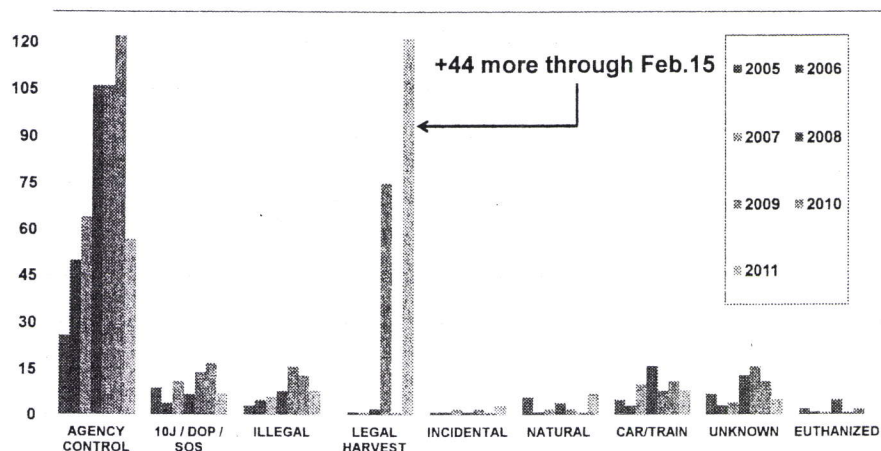
Minimum Count of Wolves in Montana

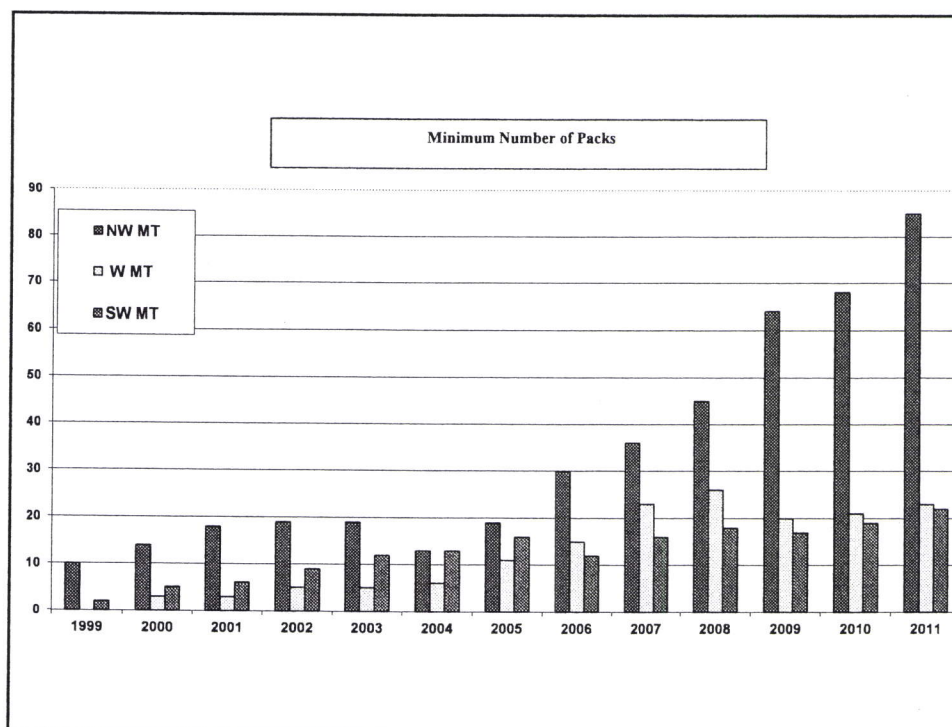
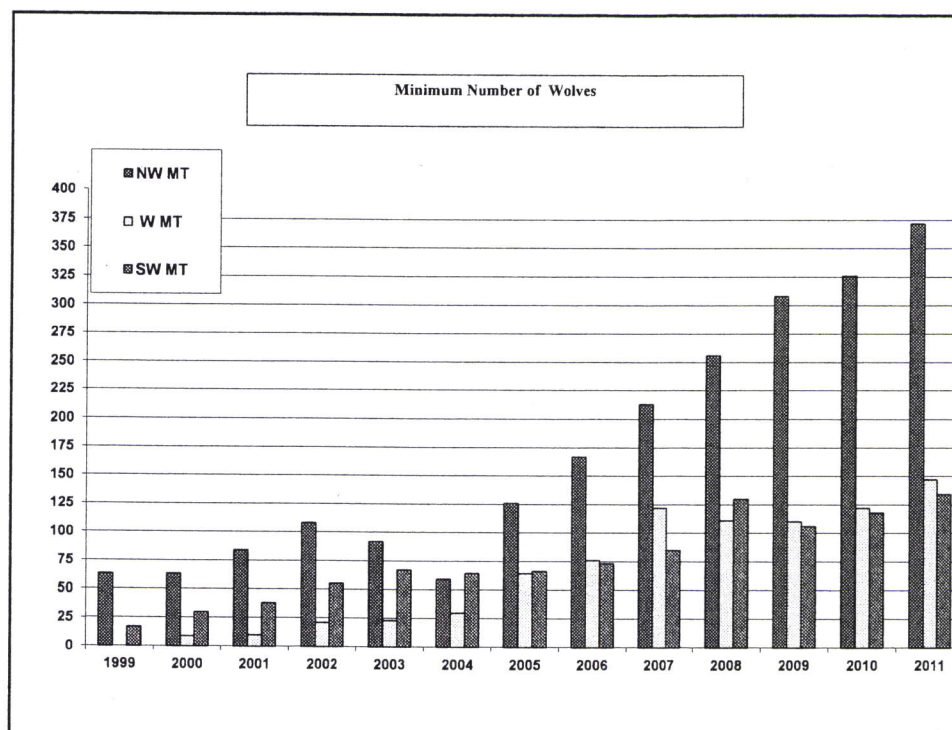


Livestock Losses from Wolf

- Livestock complaints:
 - 233 in 2009
 - 191 in 2010
 - 152 in 2011 (approx. 50% verified as wolf-caused)
- Livestock losses
 - 87 cattle, 64 sheep, 5 horses, 3 llamas in 2010
 - 74 cattle, 11 sheep, 1 horse in 2011
- 2011: 17% of packs confirmed to have killed livestock.
- 2010: 31% of packs confirmed to have killed livestock.

Wolves removed in Montana, 2005-2011





2011 Wolf Mortality = 216 + 44

(vs. 179 in 2010 and 255 in 2009)

- 122 by Hunting (in calendar year 2011)
- 64 in response to Livestock Depredation
 - (vs. 141 in 2010 and 145 in 2009)
- 8 illegally killed
- 7 vehicle collisions
- 1 train collision
- 1 electrocution (downed power line)
- 1 legal take
- 7 wolves died of natural causes
- 5 wolves died of unknown causes

Where do we go from here?



What about other large carnivores?

Large Carnivore Management

- FWP is committed to carnivore/ungulate balance that provides for long-term hunting opportunities.
- FWP is adapting management to reduce carnivore populations in response to impacts to ungulates and to minimize further reductions in hunter opportunity
- In some instances, other variables such as weather, habitat, disease, etc. have also impacted ungulate populations, and need to be included in management decisions.

Large Carnivore Management

Montana FWP will manage large carnivores – wolves, bears, and mountain lions – through a science-based strategy that:

- Maintains viable populations of ungulates
- Maintains viable populations of large carnivores
- Achieves a balance between predator and prey populations at levels that support our hunting heritage
- Proactively addresses livestock and human safety concerns

Must recognize that in some areas it won't ever be how it was

Large Carnivore Management

- Fair Chase Hunting is how we will manage large carnivores
- Adaptive Management

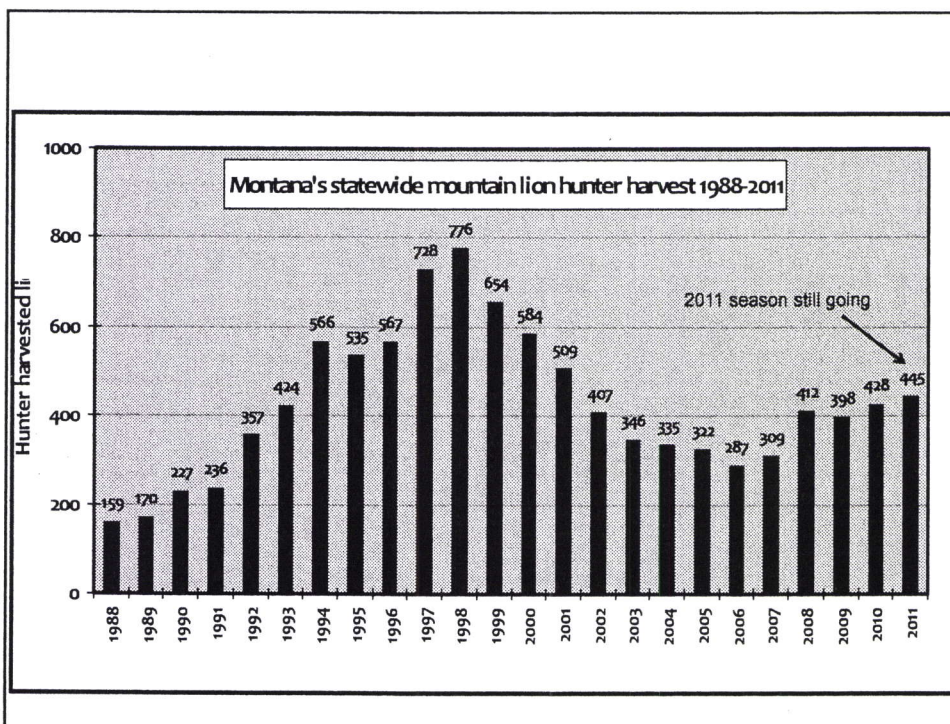


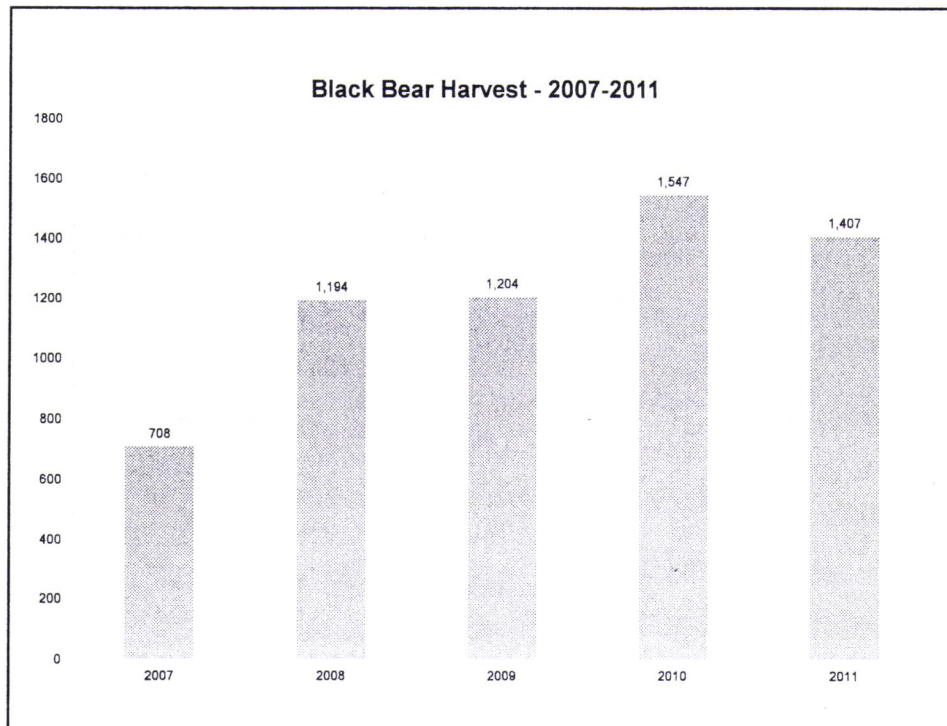
Large Carnivore Management – what have we done

- Applying results of 10-year study of mountain lions in the Garnett Mountains that improved our understanding of population dynamics, lion densities, source-sink dynamics, and impacts of hunting
- Applying results of 8-year study of black bears to determine harvest rates and acceptable harvest levels
- Ongoing recovery efforts for grizzly bears to regain state management authority (GYE delisted once)
- Wolf recovery, monitoring, modeling, and research and evolving management
- Madison and Bitterroot Wolf-Elk Research
- Development of monitoring methods using hunter observations

Large Carnivore Management – what have we done (management)

- Delisted Wolves (3 Times!)
- Extended black bear spring and fall seasons
- Added archery opportunities for lions, wolves, and bears (increased bear harvest by approx. 100)
- Hybrid season for lions in R2 and increasing quota for mountain lions
- Increased wolf quota from 2009, extended wolf seasons and lifting of hunter orange requirements
- Liberalized wolf depredation response protocol; Increased wolf collaring





2012 Wolf Season

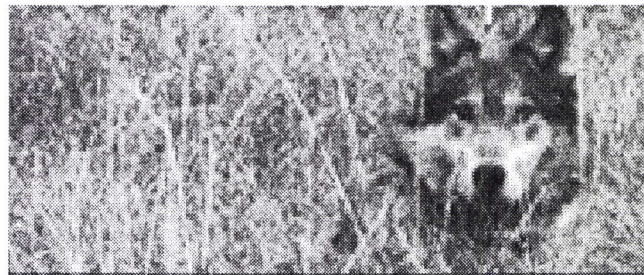


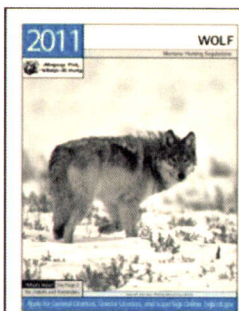
2012 Wolf Season Considerations

- General Season – No WMUs, No Quotas
- Longer Season (through Feb. 15)
- Trapping??
- Electronic Call (requires statute change)
- > 1 per hunter (requires statute change)
- Reduce nonresident price from \$350→\$50
(requires statute change)

2012 Wolf Season – next steps

- May Commission meeting – proposals
- June – public comment period
- July Commission meeting – final regs
- 2013 Legislature – propose wolf package





2011 Montana Wolf Hunting Season Report



Legal Challenges

Federal Lawsuit on Wolf Delisting

In April 2011, the U.S. Congress passed a law with a rider that revised the Endangered & Threatened Wildlife list by removing most wolves in the Northern Rockies.

In May, the USFWS published the final delisting rule. In June, a lawsuit was filed in the Federal District Court challenging the constitutionality of the Congressional rider. FWP submitted amicus curiae briefs.

On Aug. 3, the court upheld the constitutionality of the Congressional rider. Five days later, a group of plaintiffs filed a notice of appeal to the 9th Circuit Court and a second group soon filed a notice of appeal to the 9th Circuit. An emergency motion was then filed for an injunction to stop the proposed wolf hunts in Idaho and Montana. The State of Montana and FWP filed an amicus curiae brief in support of the federal decision. Wolf hunting began Aug. 30 in Idaho and Sept. 3 in Montana.

Montana's Legal Position

With the delisting in May 2011, the wolf was reclassified as a species in need of management. Federal regulations were replaced by Montana's laws, rules, and wolf conservation and management plan.

The Future

FWP will discuss 2012-13 regulation changes that could include allowing hunters to take more than one wolf or to purchase more than one hunting license. Also possible are rules to allow electronic calls, more wolf hunting educational opportunities, statewide quota adjustment and a longer hunting season.

Predator and Prey

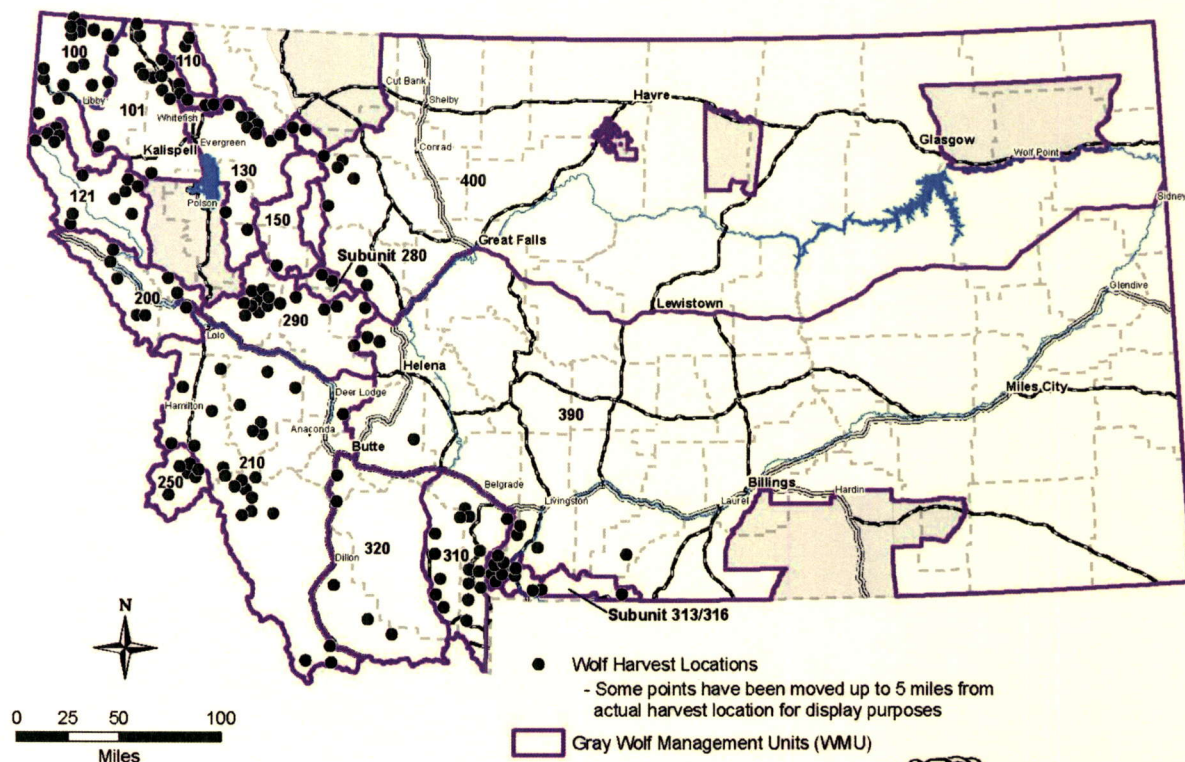
FWP seeks to ensure that the wolf stays off of the federal endangered species list while pursuing a wolf population level below current numbers in response to impacts on game populations and livestock.

2011 Gray Wolf Hunting Season Harvest Locations

Of the statewide harvest, 132 (80 percent) came from nine counties:

- Beaverhead (13)
- Flathead (22)
- Gallatin (11)
- Lewis & Clark (8)
- Lincoln (26)
- Missoula (15)
- Park (13)
- Ravalli (13)
- Sanders (11)

The other counties include: Carbon (1), Deer Lodge (1), Glacier (2), Granite (5), Jefferson (1), Lake (1), Madison (6), Mineral (5), Pondera (1), Powell (4), Stillwater (1), Silver Bow (2), Teton (4).





2011 Montana Wolf Hunting Season Report



About the 2011 Wolf Hunt

Quotas, Harvests & Closures

- Statewide quota: 220
- Total Harvested: 166, 75 percent.
- The season closed Feb. 15, a season extension was proposed in Nov. and adopted in order to increase wolf harvest closer to the statewide quota of 220.
- The season closed Feb. 15, an extension of 46 days beyond the scheduled Dec. 31, 2011 closing. A total of 45 wolves were harvested during the extended season.
 - WMU 100: quota 18; 16 harvested.
 - WMU 101: quota 19; 19 harvested. Season closed Dec. 19.
 - WMU 110: quota 2; 2 harvested. Season closed Feb. 1, 2012.
 - WMU 121: quota 17; 13 harvested.
 - WMU 130: quota 12; 11 harvested.
 - WMU 150: quota three; one harvested.
 - WMU 200: quota 22; eight harvested.
 - WMU 210: quota 36; 25 harvested.
 - WMU 250: quota 18; six harvested.
 - WMU 290: quota 20; 17 harvested.
 - WMU 310: quota 19; 16 harvested.
 - WMU 320: quota six; five harvested.
 - WMU 390: quota 18; 18 harvested. Season closed Nov. 16, 2011.
 - four wolves harvested in subunits north of Yellowstone National Park (hunting districts 313 & 316). Season closed Oct. 6.
 - WMU 400: quota 10; nine harvested.

Hunt Details

- Elk and deer hunters opportunistically harvested 43 wolves (26 percent).
- Most wolves were harvested before noon.

Harvest Geography

- 52 percent of wolves harvested on public lands.
- Wolves were harvested from about 60 different packs.
- Wolves were harvested from 10 different (of the 60) packs with confirmed livestock or domestic dog encounters.

**See back page for a map of harvest locations.*

Wolf Licenses and Hunters

- A total of 18,689 licenses were purchased (18,531 residents; 158 non-residents).
- FWP estimates about 13 percent of Montana resident elk hunters bought a wolf license in 2011.
- Licenses cost \$19 for residents and \$350 for non-residents.
- Total license revenue: \$407,389
- Most successful wolf hunters (163) were Montana residents.
- No wolves were harvested by hunters with an outfitter.

About the Wolf Harvest

Age & Sex

- 97 adults: 58 percent of total harvest.
- 35 yearlings: 21 percent of total harvest.
- 25 juveniles: 15 percent of total harvest.
- nine age unknown: 6 percent of total harvest.
- 86 males
- 80 females

Average Weight

- Adults: 91 pounds. Largest wolf weighed 120 pounds.
- Yearlings: 73 pounds
- Juveniles: 58 pounds

Color

- 115 were gray.
- 37 were black.
- Seven were white.
- Seven were unknown.

Health

- Most were healthy; 5 percent noted unhealthy or with some form of injury.
 - Five had injuries or scars to paws or shoulder.
 - At least two had parasites.
 - One had porcupine quill injuries.